



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority - Human Resources

**Minutes of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold,
Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 8 November 2024 from 10.00 am - 11.12 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Nick Raine (Chair)
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Nayab Patel
Councillor Audra Wynter

Absent

Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor John Lee

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Leila Berry	- Area Manager
Mick Sharman	- Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Malcolm Townroe	- Solicitor, Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Laura Wilson	- Senior Governance Officer

21 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Robert Corden

22 Declarations of Interests

None.

23 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 April 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

24 In2People Report: Understanding our Communities

Leila Berry, Area Manager, presented the report which provides the findings of research commissioned to measure the perceptions of minoritised groups in Nottingham City towards Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, highlighting the following:

- (a) the focus of the research was on women and racially minoritised groups in Nottingham City, although learning can be extrapolated to similar communities living in other areas of the county;
- (b) over 35 groups and 400 people participated in the research and the work explored key themes of perception, barriers, accessibility and engagement with NFRS. The groups were drawn from youth clubs, sports clubs, community projects, education establishments, external staff networks and groups relating to faith, women, LGBTQ+ and older people;
- (c) insights drawn from the findings of the research will be used to inform the People and Culture Strategy 2025-28 and associated workforce planning activities. As an example, findings from Gen Z participants (born mid 1990s – mid 2020s) indicated:
 - a lack of knowledge of the different roles available within NFRS;
 - graduates do not understand how their skills and qualifications can be used and about opportunities for career advancement;
 - those who knew a firefighter were more likely to be attracted to the role;
 - there is a lack of visibility of NFRS at schools/colleges;
 - there are concerns about negative media portrayals of the fire service;
 - there is a perceived stigma regarding the suitability of certain religions or cultures for roles in the fire service;
- (d) a need for strong and consistent leadership and collective narrative about benefits of diversifying the workforce has been identified. For this reason, the Service is opting to incorporate the wider learning from the research into strategy and planning activities to ensure consistency of approach over the medium term;
- (e) the report recommends building and engaging the understanding of the wider workforce, as well as harnessing the capabilities and potential of internal support departments including the Community Engagement Team, Corporate Communications and Human Resources teams;
- (f) the research indicated that style and breadth of some of the Service's current communications activities are failing to reach prominence within minority communities, and that the Service would benefit from having a more prominent marketing and public relations approach to its communications activities;
- (g) recruitment practices should be improved to actively promote available opportunities, as well as to demonstrate that the Service is a welcoming and progressive environment where individuals can grow, thrive and progress on merit;
- (h) the report recommends measuring and reporting of progress, as well as maximising opportunities to learn from the experience of community organisations who have extensive experience of working with Nottinghamshire Police in support of their positive action activities;
- (i) the report has now been published internally for NFRS staff and externally on the Service's website. An initial workshop with the Service's Strategic Leadership Team has been undertaken and proposals are being formulated to progress the

recommendations made as part of the People and Culture Strategy development underpinning the next CRMP;

- (j) following the engagement with In2People, 53% of respondents expressed an interest in visiting the Service to view life as a firefighter. The Service is currently arranging a number of 'have a go' days to support this aspiration.

During the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (k) the report focuses on improvements, but NFRS is already working well and leading the way on inclusivity, and is trusted by most people. More work could be done to engage minority communities in Nottingham City, building sustainable and long term relations, as well as working class white communities in the wider Nottinghamshire area;
- (l) it would be good to circulate examples of success stories of recruitments from under-represented groups to advertise the wider work of the fire service and inspire people to work for NFRS.

Resolved to

(1) note the findings of the research conducted by In2People;

(2) endorse the use of the findings to inform the development of the People and Culture Strategy 2025-28 and subsequent workforce planning activities.

25 Gender Pay Gap 2024

Leila Berry, Area Manager, presented the report which outlines the outcomes of the gender pay gap audit for the year ending 31 March 2024, highlighting the following:

- (a) in 2023-24 the mean hourly pay gap was 5.05% compared to 12.53% for 2022-23. The median average was 3.24% for 2023-24 compared to 7.78% for 2022-23. The gender pay gap has significantly reduced, in part due to a refinement of the calculations in line with Government guidance to exclude pay not linked to duties or hours worked and annual leave allowances;
- (b) for all work groups the mean average pay for men is higher than the average for women. This is due to the gender imbalance within the workforce (81.9% men and 18.1% women) and the proportion of men in higher graded operational and managerial roles. The gender pay gap does not indicate a disparity in the hourly rate paid to men and women undertaking the same job. The figures reflect the low number of women in operational roles. The number of women in support roles account for 63.16% of total women in the Service, however more men than women are employed in managerial or senior professional roles which accounts for the pay gap disparity;
- (c) the lack of women in operational supervisory and senior management roles is a perennial issue. The Service is continuing to work to encourage more women to apply for firefighter roles, as well as supporting those already in the Service to

progress to more senior roles;

- (d) the structure and gender profile of the fire and rescue service presents particular challenges to closing the gender pay gap. Over recent years, changes to leadership development programmes have concentrated on a different leadership style based on coaching and effective people skills, which is also reflected in selection processes, and this will change the culture of the Service over time. This is more likely to attract women to leadership roles within the Service;
- (e) the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Women's Network was established in 2021, and provides support and guidance to women across the workforce. As well as this, the network provides targeted learning and development opportunities for members and is a valuable source of challenge to identify barriers to recruitment and progression which particularly impact women;
- (f) the Service is seeking to adopt a longer term and more sustainable approach to diversifying the workforce. The first stage of the process has been to identify dedicated resources to undertake community engagement and positive action activities. This has been delivered as part of the Prevention function review carried out under the Futures 25 change and improvement programme.

During the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (g) more work could be done on more flexible working opportunities within the shift system which is quite rigid at the moment, which could provide more opportunities for those with caring responsibilities;
- (h) with so few women in operational roles it can be difficult to provide visible role models to encourage other women to apply for these roles;
- (i) reduction of the gender pay gap should be celebrated and communicated appropriately.

Resolved to

- (1) note the contents of the report;**
- (2) endorse the actions set out in Paragraph 2.10 of the report, which are designed to enhance the career advancement of women within the Service.**

26 Human Resources Update

Leila Berry, Area Manager, presented the report providing an update on key human resources metrics for Quarter 4 of the financial year 2023-24 plus Quarters 1 and 2 of financial year 2024-25., highlighting the following:

- (a) during the period 1 January to 30 September 2024, 82 employees commenced employment. There have been 61 leavers and 82 starters during this period. This has resulted in an actual workforce figure of 837 (this includes 69 dual contractors);

- (b) reasons for sickness absence at NFRS broadly mirror the national trends with Musculo skeletal and mental health related absences featuring significantly in all workgroups;
- (c) during the review period, one disciplinary hearing resulted in a dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct. There were seven further disciplinary investigations undertaken. Three grievances were raised, two were not upheld, one was partially upheld. Two firefighter apprentices did not pass their probationary assessment and were dismissed on capability grounds. There was one employment tribunal case;
- (d) women currently constitute 17.44% (140) of the total workforce. The gender split in Support staff roles (total 166) is 48% male and 52% female. This is largely reflective in different grade bands although there is a slightly larger percentage of women occupying more junior positions;
- (e) employees from minority ethnic backgrounds constitute 7.3% of the workforce. 2021 Census data shows the working age (18-64) population from ethnic minority backgrounds for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire combined is 21.9% demonstrating that the Service has much more to do to reflect the community it serves;
- (f) a Wholetime firefighter recruitment process took place last year and the initial training course, comprising 20 trainees started in April 2024 with successful trainees completing the course in July. Of the 20 trainees, four were women and six were from a racially minoritised community. An On-Call recruitment campaign closed during April 2024, and 15% of the 85 applicants were women with 25% (three) successful at interview.;
- (g) the monitoring data shows that the workforce profile is not representative of the local population, but it does show that there have been some small, but positive, changes since the last report.

During the subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- (h) On-Call roles are specific to location, which can reduce the impact on diversity of those eligible to apply;
- (i) occupational health support has recently been invested in and improved for staff suffering from mental health or trauma related issues, in order to support them and reduce long term sickness absence.

Resolved to note the contents of the report.

27 Review of Workforce Plan 2023-25

Leila Berry, Area Manager, presented the report providing an update on progress against the Workforce Plan 2023-25, highlighting the following:

- (a) the Wholetime establishment is currently 431. The current workforce is 429, which represents a shortfall of two roles;

- (b) the number of employees providing On-Call cover currently stands at 242, of which 69 are dual contract. There have been 13 leavers and 14 new appointments to trainee firefighter roles between April and September 2024. The number of leavers is below workforce projections, however the Service continues its successful work via the On-Call Support Team (OCST) to maintain the number of On-Call firefighters;
- (c) changes to the Prevention Team structure were concluded on 1 September 2024 as an output of the Futures 25 efficiency strategy. This resulted in the disestablishment of 12 posts and the establishment of 10 new posts. Seven colleagues have achieved roles at the same grade, two have been promoted to a role at a higher grade and one into a role at a lower grade with pay protection in accordance with Service policy.

Resolved to note the contents of the report.

28 People Strategy Update

Leila Berry, Area Manager, presented the report providing an update on the priorities for the People Strategy 2022-25, highlighting the following:

- (a) work to date has been centred around the Prevention function review completed as part of the Futures 25 change and improvement programme. The outcomes included identification of dedicated resources to deliver community engagement and positive action activities in a sustainable way, as well as creating clear progression pathways for both Green and Grey Book staff through the department;
- (b) in addition to this, a digital maturity assessment has been commissioned to support the Service to shape its approach to delivering effective digital and ICT functions, which is seen as being key to delivery of aspirations relating to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service going forward. This is underway now and due to report early in the new year;
- (c) following receipt of the report into the Standards of Behaviour in Fire and Rescue Services from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) relating to delivery of people functions, the Service is reviewing its people functions to ensure that it is suitably structured and adequately resourced to deliver the stretching goals set, both by HMICFRS, as well as the ambitions of the Authority and the Service relating to people and culture;
- (d) the annual Personal Development Review (PDR) supports colleagues who are aspiring for promotion, through dedicated time with their line manager to discuss career aspirations. This is supplemented by a range of development opportunities, including incident command taster sessions, and positive action events targeted at those who are currently underrepresented in the leadership cohort;
- (e) the Service has recently supplemented its leadership and organisational development function, and is seeking to maximise opportunities for coaching, mentoring and reverse mentoring to support colleagues who are already in leadership roles alongside those who are aspiring to be;

- (f) the Service has invested heavily in operational training capabilities, including the creation of a state of the art incident command training suite, alongside significant investment at the Service Development Centre in Ollerton. The investment enhances the training offered at these sites, alongside dignity at work improvements for all colleagues;
- (g) the CRMP Assurance Board routinely reviews compliance rates for operational revalidation training, alongside other mandatory training for all staff to ensure the workforce is competent and effective. The Service has continued to invest in digital learning where appropriate to support the accessible learning and development for colleagues;
- (h) the firefighter apprenticeship programme continues to be delivered successfully, offering an accredited, high quality entry level route into the Service. The Service also has four funded apprenticeship posts aligned to national standards within support functions;
- (i) Throughout the life of this People Strategy the Service has continued to support staff networks at a strategic level to cultivate a culture of trust. Staff networks and other staff groups are regularly engaged to support projects where the employee voice is paramount. Recent examples include the Uniform Review Working Group, and the access and inclusion estates project;
- (j) the Service undertook a staff survey between June and July this year. A 68% completion rate was achieved, alongside an improvement in satisfaction rates in almost all aspects of the previous survey. The results are very strong, with an overall staff satisfaction score of 72.2%;
- (k) during the strategy period, the Service has successfully completed a dedicated project to ensure that the Core Code of Ethics is understood by staff, as well as being embedded into policy, procedures and ways of working;
- (l) the Service has implemented a confidential reporting line, to provide an alternative route for colleagues to report issues anonymously. Between December 2023 to date, 13 concerns have been raised for a range of issues including reporting instances where staff and management behaviour has fallen below the expected standard.

Resolved to note the contents of the report.